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J. Cermakian

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SANDNER, Gerhard, **Die Hauptstädte Zentralamerikas : Wachstumprobleme, Gestaltwandel, Sozialgefüge**, Heidelberg, Quelle und Mayer, 1969, 198 pages, 54 maps and graphs, 48 statistical tables, 35 separate photographs.

There have been many valuable national or regional monographs on Central America written by geographers of several nationalities. But probably few of these have been the result of so much painstaking and thorough fieldwork as those originating among the German school of Latin American geography. The works of Schmieder and Pfeiffer in Mexico, of Lauer in El Salvador and of Weischet in Chile are well-known. Dr. Gerhard Sandner, a Hamburg geographer specialising in Central America, is also well-known for his articles and monographs on this region, especially those dealing with Costa Rica. This work on the capital cities of Central America is therefore the product of many years of research and fieldwork in the area.

At first glance, Dr. Sandner's latest book is merely a regionally-oriented urban geography of Central America in the sixties. His introduction deals with the role of the capitals in the development of the various Central American states. The author also discusses the national uniqueness of each capital, and ends his introductory statement by giving a concise explanation of the methodology and goals of his research. The following six chapters, taken together, amount to a thorough regional urban geography of Central America : the author considers, in turn, the cities of Panamá, San José, Managua, Tegucigalpa, San Salvador, and Guatemala. In each case, he follows an identical approach, beginning with the physical site of each capital, going on with its historical development, pursuing with an analysis of the present-day city, with its population growth, migration (from the outside and within the city), division into neighbourhoods, and economic activities, ending with the capital city's distinctive position within the nation and sub-continent. The last chapter of Sandner's book deals with common problems and similarities between the six capitals. He considers, under this heading, the localisation factor and its significance in terms of physical geography, population growth, economic activity, and transport links. He also analyses the morphology of capital city growth in Central America and the problem of intra-urban separation into neighbourhoods. And he concludes with the role of the capital cities in the economic and social development process of the Central American nations.

The value of Sandner's work is primarily that of a very worthwhile tool of reference on Central American cities. We must congratulate the author for his excellent illustrations. Most of his maps are the products of original and painstaking research. Some of them are most interesting and well-presented, considering the scarcity of good census material in most of Latin America. For example, the maps of Panamá on pages 26-38, based on the population census of 1960, are a striking graphic representation of that city's structural problems. Another excellent example of original cartography is the map on page 62 showing journey-to-work trips within the San José metropolitan area in 1963.

In addition to the great many examples of good cartography, Sandner's book contains thirty-five black-and-white photographs showing various aspects of the Central American capitals. This wealth of illustrations, together with a well-documented bibliography, make Sandner's work a must on the reading shelf of anyone interested in Latin American geography and urban development. Let us only hope that the book will be translated into Spanish, English or French in the near future, in order to gain the much wider audience it so rightfully deserves.

Jean CERMAKIAN  
*Université du Québec  
à Trois-Rivières*